

A  
L E T T E R  
TO THE  
REV. VICECIMUS KNOX  
ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS  
A N I M A D V E R S I O N S  
ON THE  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.  
BY A RESIDENT MEMBER  
OF THAT UNIVERSITY.

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————— A Mildew'd Ear  
Blasting his Wholesome Brother.

Shakespear.

Fact must be opposed to Fact, and Argument to Argument, or else the  
Scorner may sit in his chair and exercise his scorn.

Knox on the Universities. Sect. 41. P. 154.

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O X F O R D :  
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PLATE 1. V. VIOECIMUS AND 2.

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

• *Journal of the American Medical Association*

## LETTER, &c.

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SIR,

**T**HE Abilities of a Writer display themselves, not only in the disposition of his Plan, but in the selection of his Subject. He will carefully confine himself to that branch of Composition, which falls in with the natural bent of his mind, and the object of his previous researches. Happy would it have been for you, Sir, if your Literary Pursuits had been directed by this prudent and salutary precaution: but the latter Sections of your Treatise on Education stand the melancholy Witnesses, either of your ignorance of this art of Composition, or of your wilful deviation from its rules. And the Effect has been eminently prejudicial to your Literary Character: Your veracity as a Writer, and your feelings as a Man, have been materially injured by your imprudent digressions into subjects, which, from their connection with the Moral Characters of Individuals, demanded the utmost delicacy of treatment, and the most faithful correctness of information.

A

Your



Your reflections upon the Members of Administration<sup>a</sup> bear too close a resemblance to the unmanly virulence of Party-Enthusiasm: In your observations upon the Degeneracy of the Age,<sup>a</sup> you discover rather the indiscriminate invective of a Misanthrope, than the unbiaſſed deciſions of a Philoſopher: And your indecent calumniationſ of the Clergy<sup>a</sup> are as remote from conſiſtency and truth, as from the benevolent inſtitutes of your Sacred Profeſſion.

SIMILAR to the above are your animadverſions on the Univerſity of Oxford. To this part of your work I ſhall at preſent confine myſelf, as it diſcloſes an extenſive and open field for uſeful investigation. The long ſeries of MISREPRESENTATIONS, CONTRADICTIONS, and INEFFECTUAL AMENDMENTS, which preſent themſelves through the whole courſe of your Remarks, ſupplies abundant materials to invalidate the Authority of an injudicious Reformer, and to vindicate the Character of a traduced Seminary.

I am incited to an answer, Sir, not by an apprehenſion of the conſequences of your charges, but by a firm conviction, that the Character of our Univerſity will receive an additional luſtre from a mere diſplay of the arguments of its Oppoſers. A weak and unsupported attack becomes a tacit and delicate compliment to Virtue and to Merit. The moſt flattering Panegyric on an upright Miniſter is formed

<sup>a</sup> Vide the concluding Section of Knox's Treatiſe on Education.



from the virulent invective of an Opposition. The Censorial Jurisdiction, from which Lucullus might have shrunk with apprehension, would serve only to illustrate and ennoble the character of Cato.

I shall first consider those Propositions, in which the case is MISREPRESENTED. Whenever you propose an amendment, I shall conclude, that the subject of that amendment does not at present exist.

In your second Article you propose, "That every Under Graduate should be required to reside for eight months in the year;" and in your Treatise on Education<sup>b</sup> you say, "that the majority of Academic Students do not reside more than thirteen weeks in the year." Now, Sir, I firmly assert, that the number of Under Graduates, who, either from the Rules of their Colleges, their Establishments on Foundations, their Exhibitions from Schools, their Distance from Home, or their Parents, or their own Inclinations, keep the full Academical Terms, bears to the whole number of University Students a ratio of at least five to one. The fact may be ascertained with precision; and I challenge you to the enquiry.

IN your fourth Amendment you recommend, "That the keeping of horses and dogs, and the frequenting of stables by Under Graduates, should be prevented, not by dor-

<sup>b</sup> Vide Knox's Treatise on Education. Page 177.

"mant Statutes only, but by Inspectors appointed for that particular purpose." That the Commission of Crimes can be prevented by DORMANT Statutes, is an ingenious and important discovery, which must facilitate the duties of Legislation, and elevate its Author above the fame of Machiavel, and Hobbes. But, Sir, I deny the fact, that such a prevention is at all necessary: About four years ago, a Statute was made for the express purpose of remedying this impropriety: The Statute is NOT dormant: And at this day not a single Under Graduate is allowed to keep an horse in Oxford, until he has obtained the permission of his Parents, or Guardians, of the Vice-Chancellor of the University, and of the Head and Tutor of his College.

IN your fifth Article you insinuate in the strongest Terms, "That every Academic of elevated Rank is prevented and retarded in his improvement, ruins his health, his character, and his fortune, and exposes himself to public contempt by deficiency." The very statement of your proposition is an insult to the Understanding: But on account of those among your Readers, who, from their distance from the University, are unable to form an accurate idea of the question, and who may be induced by your statement, though not to give you implicit confidence, yet to believe, that such strong assertions would not be advanced without some colour of reason, let me assure you, Sir, that in ALL the Colleges, a more rigorous Discipline is enforced upon Noblemen and Gentlemen Commoners, than

than what even your Amendments propose: and that in SEVERAL Colleges, the Heirs of the first Families in the Kingdom submit to the same Exercises, and to the same severity of Discipline, with the lowest Member of the Society. These are stubborn facts; and I defy you to controvert them.

IN your sixth Article you propose, "That the useless " Professorships should be abolished;" and in your Treatise on Education<sup>c</sup> you assert, "That the greater part of the " Professorships are perfect Sinecures." I congratulate you on having fallen on one assertion, which, though it cannot be supported by truth, may be sheltered under the authority of Illustrious Names. If you fail here, your failure is honourable, for you participate the common errors of Voltaire and of Smith. Let my Readers, however, suspend their determination upon the propriety of your Remarks, till my statement is made. Sixteen Professors and Readers are appointed by the University: Of these the Professors of Modern History, of Astronomy, of Geometry, of Natural Philosophy, of Arabic, of Law, and of Botany, the Clinical Professor, and the Readers in Chemistry and in Anatomy, deliver each of them a Course of Lectures in their respective departments once, at least, in every year. The Professor of Music amply discharges the duties of his Situation. A Latin Poetical Lecture is read every Term by the Professor of Poetry. The Professor of Theology is superseded in the discharge of his duty, by the very assiduous labours



of the present Regius Professor in Divinity. As there are two Arabic Professors, one may very justly be relieved from the duties of his office. The Emoluments of the Professorship in Morality are divided between the Proctors of each year: The very nature of their office must lead them to a most satisfactory discharge of the real duties of a Professor in Moral Philosophy.

THE facts, which I have here stated, are true: I challenge you to the most rigorous inspection of them. And now, Sir, am I not justified in my assertion, that your observations upon the Academic Professors are founded on a gross and most palpable Misrepresentation?

IN your fourteenth Article you propose, "That EFFECTUAL and not formal, instruction in Doctrinal Theology should be afforded gratis to all, who intend to take Holy Orders;" and in your Treatise on Education<sup>d</sup> you say, "That the Regius Professor of Divinity contents himself with performing the FORMAL duties of his office." The words FORMAL and EFFECTUAL convey a strong and a pointed meaning: And for the sake of your attainments as a Clergyman, and your discernment as a Critic, I hope, and I firmly believe, that you are totally unacquainted with the nature of the Theological Lectures, which at this day ARE delivered GRATIS, twice a week, during the two Winter Terms, by the present learned and able Regius Professor of Divinity.

IN your sixteenth Amendment you propose, "That the  
 "Public Libraries should be open to all Members." Now,  
 Sir, upon the present Establishment, any Under Graduate,  
 by applying to his Tutor, and giving a sufficient reason for  
 his request, will by him be presented to the Members of  
 Convocation, and indulged in the privilege of attending the  
 Bodleian Library during his whole residence in the University.

IN your Treatise on Education\* you assert, "That the  
 "College Statutes are placed in the hands of a new elected  
 "Member on a Foundation, and are locked up ever after."  
 The assertion is groundless: They are read once at least  
 every year, publicly, in the Hall or Chapel; they may be  
 obtained by application from the Head of the College; and  
 most of them may be perused in the Bodleian Library.

IN another part of your Treatise† you say "That the  
 "Seniors of the University chiefly delight in horses, and  
 "dogs, and in the joys of the chase." The assertion is as  
 groundless in its foundation, as it is injurious in its ten-  
 dency. For the credit of your Humanity, I will believe,  
 that it fell inadvertently from your pen; and that it was  
 neither suggested by the Imagination, nor approved by the  
 Understanding. In the contracted intercourses of private  
 life, the insinuations of Slander entail upon their Author  
 a speedy and a lasting Disgrace: but the Aspersions of Cha-  
 racters, to whom a confiding Nation commits the Sacred

\* Id. P. 170.

† Id. P. 183.

Charge of all their Worldly Hopes, as it is pernicious in its effects, so ought it to be exemplary in its punishment.

IN another part<sup>a</sup> you declare, " That some of the Persons  
 " of the greatest weight in the University, are peculiarly  
 " devoted to the Great World; and from a desire to please  
 " their Patrons are unwilling to restrain the young Nobility  
 " and Men of Fortune." The assertion is unwarrantable, and cannot be supported by proofs. Nay, the Persons most honoured by connections with the Nobility, and most decorated with the Dignities of Ecclesiastical Preferment, have been more particularly distinguished by their impartiality in including all Ranks of Junior Academics under the same severity of Discipline.

SPEAKING of the Vice-Chancellor's Office you say, "<sup>b</sup> That it is chiefly conversant in the conservation of  
 " external formalities." If the Office of a Magistrate of the Police, if the preservation of General Morality, if the Decision of all Academic Litigations, if the Superintendence of all proposed Amendments, if the Guardianship of Public Estates, Buildings, Libraries, and Repositories, if the Principal Curatorship of the Clarendon Press, if the maintenance of all the Rights and Privileges of the University, if an unremitting attention to the welfare of the University in the Meetings of the City and County, if the public distribution of Academic Honours, if these great and momentous

<sup>a</sup> Id. P. 189.

<sup>b</sup> Id. p. 162.



Charges be mere EXTERNAL FORMALITIES, I here cut short the present argument, pledge myself to an implicit belief in all your future Assertions, and will ever hereafter disavow my knowledge of the Powers of the simplest Terms of Language.

IN your seventeenth Amendment you propose, " That the Professor of Modern Languages should employ one Assistant, at least, in each Language; and that every Class should raise a sum for their payment." It has unfortunately escaped your observation, Sir, that the Professor DOES employ an Assistant in each language; that each of the Assistants receive an annual stipend from the Professor, and that they attend their Pupils at their own Apartments in the Colleges.

IN your Treatise on Education you say, " that the Expences of an University Education are enormous." It is impossible to speak positively and determinately upon so delicate a subject; as the decision must ultimately depend upon the peculiar and preconceived sentiments of Individuals. Let us however endeavour to ascertain by Facts the propriety of your Remark. In every College the Expenditure of the Student in all the articles of Provision is regulated by strict and determinate rules. The Under Graduates are, in great measure, prevented by the vigilance of the University Officers, from indulging in the Extravagances of Inns, Taverns, and Coffee-Houses. The price of Hair-dressing,

<sup>1</sup> Id. P. 110. Note.

Room-rent, Washing, Attendants, &c. &c. is even lower than at most other places. The Collegiate and University dues are peculiarly trifling. The charges of Tuition are, according to your own confession, Sir, even culpably inconsiderable. And the sum paid by the Pupils for attendance at the different Public Lectures, is by no means equal to the sum required in London by the Professors of the Experimental branches of Science. If these Facts are not sufficient to invalidate your remark, let me establish my argument by comparison. In few situations, in which a young man of a similar rank with an Academic could be placed, would his necessary expences be lower than in Oxford or Cambridge. Let the Officers of the Army and the Students in Law and Physic stand forward, and attest the assertion. Nay, many of our Public Schools nearly equal our Universities in Pecuniary Considerations. And the expenditure of a Boy under a Private Tutor even exceeds the necessary and the general expenditure of an Academic.

OVER the several parts of your Treatise are scattered the following assertions: “<sup>a</sup> That the Heads of Colleges  
“ seldom trouble themselves with a personal interference  
“ in the preservation of Discipline:” “<sup>1</sup> That the English  
“ Universities are in less repute, than they were formerly.”  
“<sup>m</sup> That the Proctors give frequent reprimands for trifling  
“ neglects, and suffer daily instances of the Violation of the  
“ Statutes, which tend to Ruin and Infamy, pass totally un-

<sup>a</sup> Id. P. 165.

<sup>1</sup> Id. P. 106.

<sup>m</sup> Id. P. 163.

“ noticed

“ noticed, or but slightly corrected for the sake of appear-  
 “ ances.” “ \* That a desire to please the Great, and bring  
 “ them to the Universities for the sake of Honour, and  
 “ Profit, and other political motives, causes a compliance  
 “ with fashionable Manners, a relaxation of Discipline, and  
 “ a connivance at Ignorance, Folly, and Vice.” “ ° That  
 “ the Universities began to degenerate with the first Founda-  
 “ tion of Colleges.” “ ° That Infidelity is gaining ground  
 “ in the Unversities :” “ ° That in the Universities the  
 “ lower Orders emulate the higher, and, by the Contagion of  
 “ example, Extravagance becomes universal :” and “ ° That  
 “ Academical Testimonia deceive the World.”

These Charges are serious and important; and, if they  
 could be established by Proofs, would inflict on our Univer-  
 sity a severe and fatal wound. But I am happy to be enabled,  
 from actual Observation, to put on them all my full une-  
 quivocating Denial. I would support this Denial by Facts,  
 if the long enumeration of your Misrepresentations had not  
 allayed my apprehensions of the consequences of your  
 Charges, and sunk your Authority below the Dignity even  
 of Controversial Disquisition.

FROM this long list of palpable Misrepresentations, the  
 inferences, which we draw respecting their Author, are hu-  
 miliating and painful to Humanity. You resided regularly  
 in the University for seven years; and were more imme-

\* Id. P. 123. ° Id. P. 157. ° Id. P. 167. ° Id. P. 189. ° Id. P. 193.



diately connected with the Place by an Establishment upon a Foundation. During so long a Period, a mere common Observer would have ascertained these simple Facts with some degree of precision: But the Person, who actually looked upon the present Establishment with Indignation, and who was probably meditating an Amendment, must have examined into abuses, with the severity of a Censor, and the accuracy of a Reformer. There are, Sir, but two Reasons, by which we can account for your Misrepresentations. I will not presume to specify the precise degree of Credit, which the Public may in future afford to your Assertions: but in the name of Humanity let me entreat you to ground your defence upon the Argument of Ignorance; to establish your Moral Character even upon the Ruins of your Literary Fame; and to sacrifice the Powers of your Understanding to the Purity of your Heart.

THE transition from Misrepresentations to CONTRADICTIONS is easy and natural. The Man, who has once deviated from Truth, requires an uncommon clearness of Perception to avoid the perplexities of Error. How far you, Sir, may be authorized to class Consistency in the number of your Literary Virtues, will appear from the following Detail.

IN your third Amendment you propose, "That no  
" Tradesman should be allowed to give Credit;" in your  
eighth

eighth, " That the Tutors should superintend the Tradesmens  
 " Bills." In your seventh you say, " That the Tutors Sti-  
 " pends are at present too little;" and in your Treatise on  
 Education, " That the Office of Tutor is lucrative." In  
 your eighth Amendment, " That the COLLEGE Tutor should  
 " superintend the Tradesmen's Bills," and in your Treatise,  
 " That the PRIVATE Tutor should have the whole manage-  
 " ment of the Pupils Finances." In one Passage of your  
 Treatise you " censure not the object of those Parents, whose  
 " Circumstances render it necessary to seek a Maintenance  
 " for their Children in the University:" and in another,  
 " you entreat Parents not to let their Sons incur danger of  
 " Moral and Mental corruption, for the sake of adding a few  
 Pounds a year to their Allowance." Speaking of the Dean  
 of the College, you say, " That he neglects the Discipline  
 " of the College in order to ingratiate himself with the  
 " Young Men, who may, when Fellows, confer on him the  
 " Office of Principal:" and immediately after you say, " That  
 " the Dean's Office is Annual, and filled in regular Rotation."  
 Now, Sir, that all the Fellows of a College should be aspiring  
 at the same time for the Headship, is a circumstance, which  
 can be admitted only by a Writer of your apparent Credulity.  
 In your 7 Section upon the Statutes of the University you say,  
 " That the College Statutes are placed in the hands of a  
 " Young Man on the day of his admission on the Foundation,  
 " and are ever after locked up;" and in two Pages farther

\* Id. P. 165.    † Id. P. 120.    ‡ Id. P. 152.    § Id. P. 118.    ¶ Id. P. 165.  
 7 Id. Sect. 44. P. 170.

you say, "That they are read two or three Days in the  
 "Year publicly in the Chapel of the College." In your <sup>a</sup> Sec-  
 tion upon Testimonia you recommend in one Part a general  
 Character for all, and in another a particular Character for  
 each. In one part of your Treatise <sup>b</sup> you say, "That the Age  
 "of the Young Men will not bear Restraint." and in the  
 very next Page, you talk of the "Restoration of College  
 "Discipline." In one passage <sup>c</sup> you assert, "That under the  
 "same circumstances Young Men would in any place exhi-  
 "bit the same Appearance;" and in another <sup>d</sup> you speak of  
 "a Difference, which aggravates the Depravity of Aca-  
 "demics." In one part <sup>e</sup> you stile "those Persons the de-  
 "clared Enemies of the University, who wish totally to alter  
 "its Constitution;" and in another <sup>f</sup> you say, "That it  
 "might be advantageous, if the Colleges were dispersed,  
 "and their Revenues employed in building and supporting  
 "separate Colleges in various parts of the Kingdom." Speaking of the Original Intention of Universities <sup>g</sup> you say,  
 "That Young Men are entered as Members of them in  
 "compliance with the Customs of their Country;" and in  
 the very next sentence you assert, "That they enter perhaps  
 "originally hoping to derive peculiar Advantages from  
 "Places so celebrated for Education." In your Observations  
 on University Honours you say, <sup>h</sup> "That they might contri-  
 "bute to give the Graduate credit in a Land of Strangers;"  
 and three lines after assert, "That those very Honours were

<sup>a</sup> Sect. 48. <sup>b</sup> Id. P. 111. <sup>c</sup> Id. P. 111. <sup>d</sup> Id. P. 167. <sup>e</sup> Id. P. 121.

<sup>f</sup> Id. P. 148. <sup>g</sup> Id. P. 160. <sup>h</sup> Id. P. 196.



“ fallen into Contempt.” Speaking of the Proctor’s Office, you say,<sup>1</sup> “ That it is OFTEN executed with equal judgment, “ and candour ;” and immediately after assert, “ That “ DAILY instances are seen of Violations of the Statutes, “ which tend to Ruin and Infamy, pass totally unnoticed, “ or but slightly corrected, for the sake of appearances.” In your Letter<sup>1</sup> to our Chancellor you say, “ That your Proposals will be withstood by Authority in the Hands of “ those, who enjoy Emoluments in the present disarranged “ state of the University ;” and yet the twentieth Article of those Proposals advises, “ That if any diminution of Income “ should happen to any Individual whatever, in consequence “ of these Alterations, a full compensation should be made “ him at the public Expence, during his Life, or Residence “ in the University.”

THE Retrospect of such accumulated and palpable Contradictions forms a painful and most humiliating object to the Pride of the Human Understanding. Nature, indeed, seems to balance her Favours with peculiar Precision ; and while she lavishes an Imagination capable of the most comprehensive Designs, she blends it with a Judgment contracted in its Views, and perplexed in its Operations : She has even caused you to turn your own Weapons against yourself ; and has made you the unwary Instrument of your own Defeat.

<sup>1</sup> Id. P. 163.

<sup>2</sup> P. 3.

THE Misrepresentations and Contradictions of a Controversialist confer only a negative Triumph on the Arguments of his Adversary. The Victory must be compleated by positive and incontrovertible Testimonies. From this fairer and more manly mode of Defence my Subject shall not recede. Let us suppose, that you had made your previous Statements with Consistency and Truth; and let us waive every Superiority, which I may have obtained from your Failure in these two indispenfible Requisites. I am still prepared to meet you, and to dispute either the NECESSITY or the EFFICACY, of all your proposed AMENDMENTS, taken individually, and in Order.

Your first Amendment advises “ That the Oaths, required  
 “ at Matriculation and Admission to Scholarships and Fel-  
 “ lowships, should be diminished in Number, and altered  
 “ in Form.” The Statutes of private Colleges, which we bind ourselves to observe at our Admission upon a Foundation, cannot with propriety be changed or diminished by any Power on Earth: They may be considered as a Sacred Deposit committed to our Trust by a confiding Founder and Ancestor: He has bestowed on us an ample Reward to compensate for the Observance of them: And we have no more Right to amend or abridge them, than to alienate the Benefices, to which they are affixed. The recent Observations upon this Subject of the Illustrious Personage, who, at this Day, fills the highest Office in the Legal Profession, reflect equal Honour on his Abilities as a Lawyer, and his Integrity as a Man.

THE

THE Statutes of the University, as they are of a more public Nature, may be excepted from this sacred severity of Observance. But every Establishment, in this and every other Kingdom, possesses its own peculiar Rights and Privileges: And the Exaction of an Oath, for the preservation of those Rights and Privileges, from every new admitted Member, is consistent with the dictates of Reason, and the first principles of Government. The Statutes, which this Amendment advises us to alter, were formed by the greatest Modelers of the present European Institutions; and have produced their proposed Utility through many an illustrious Generation. They were carefully observed by those Characters of earlier Ages, whom our Reformer proposes as the Subjects of our Eulogies, and the Objects of our Imitation: And surely it is presumption in us, an unworthy and degenerate Race, to condemn, from tenderness of Conscience, those very Ceremonies, to which the most moral of our Ancestors submitted with cheerfulness. But an Alteration in the fundamental Principles of an antient Establishment endangers the Peace and Security of that Establishment for ever. When an inroad has been once made into its original Forms and Institutions, a precedent is established for the propositions of every dangerous Innovator. We cannot presume to hope, that Posterity will abide by our Amendments: They will doubtless vindicate a Right of superseding them, and of erecting on their Ruins their own fancied Model of Perfection. And thus the Peace and Security, which are so peculiarly requisite for the Pursuits of an Academic Retirement, will be

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perpetually



perpetually violated by useless attempts at Innovation and ideal Improvement.

THE second Reform suggests "a requisition of eight "months Residence from every Under Graduate." What I have advanced upon this subject in the former part of this Letter, prevents me from enlarging upon it on the present occasion. Though I wish not to argue against the utility of a long and continued Residence; yet I contend, that the great ends of an Academic Education are satisfactorily obtained by those Students, who keep the full University Terms. The ratio, which they bear to the whole number, has been already specified, and is too considerable to justify an infringement upon the antient Establishment. Besides, the necessity of such an Infringement is utterly precluded by the inforcement of full Terminal Residence, which has already taken place in many Colleges, and which is becoming more generally prevalent every Year.

THE third Amendment proposes, "That the incurring "of debt should be effectually prohibited by discommuning "the Tradesmen, who give Credit." The design is eminently commendable; and, if it could be executed, would place its Author in the first class of public Benefactors. But before such a plan could be accomplished, the Nature of the Human Mind must undergo an Alteration. It is painful to anticipate the frailties of the Heart: but a Mind, naturally addicted to extravagance (and in the great number of Academics

demics it cannot be supposed, that all are virtuous) will ever evade the Severity of Restriction; and, if it cannot indulge its Propensities by open and manly means, will endeavour to accomplish them by Artifice and Chicanery. The enforcement of this Amendment would either give rise to the most degrading connections between the Tradesman, and the Student; or would open a secret communication with the Tradesmen of distant Places, to which the Jurisdiction of the University does not extend. The incurring of debt would not be effectually prevented; but by a fruitless attempt to correct one temporary error of the heart, we should introduce another more degrading in its Principles, and lasting in its Effects. By endeavouring to suppress the youthful Ardor of Extravagance, which is generally superseded by the Prudence of Manhood, we should infuse into the tender mind a cold and deadly Poison, which would extinguish every liberal and elevated sentiment, and degrade its future actions below the Rules of Honor and of Justice.

THE fourth, fifth, sixteenth and seventeenth Amendments, the latter part of the sixth, and the former part of the fourteenth, are grounded on a Mistatement, and require not an Answer.

THE great "Addition," which is proposed by the sixth Amendment "to be made to the number of Proctors," would not only be useless, but even prejudicial. By augmenting their Number you would diminish the Reverence, which is paid

paid to their Authority. Besides the Proctors at present with their Assistants, are amply sufficient for the most satisfactory discharge of the Duties of their Office. From the unfavourable Description, which you have given, Sir, of the Morals of Academics, you may not assent to the justice of this Remark: But, to establish the truth of it, I appeal to the numerous Characters of Integrity and Honour, now scattered over the whole kingdom, who have had opportunities to prosecute the enquiry, and liberality to determine with Candour.

WITH respect to "the increase of Tutors, and to "the Augmentation of their stipends," suggested in the seventh Amendment, little need be said. It would be impossible to ascertain, with the most distant regard to accuracy, the number of Pupils allotted to each Tutor, they vary so materially in the different Colleges. We may, however, argue with more certainty upon the grounds of Comparison: And the necessity of an Addition will appear less urgent, when we recollect, that in Schools, where, from the inexperienced age of the Scholars, a more particular attention ought to be bestowed by the Master on each Student, in them the number of Boys allotted to each Master abundantly exceeds the number of Pupils allotted in Colleges to each Tutor.

THE "superintendence of Tradesmen's Bills by the Tutor," proposed in the eighth Amendment, I cannot approve.

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In conformance with your advice a Young Man could not enter, till he was nineteen : and his age is then sufficiently advanced to allow him the right of superintending his own Accounts. The advantages, resulting from the exercise of that Right, are various. He would from the necessity of frequent Inspection be kept continually upon his guard against Extravagance : He would be able to consider with more justness upon the propriety or impropriety of the several extraneous Expences, to which he must necessarily be tempted in the course of a long Residence : And he would likewise be early initiated in the useful practice of accustoming himself to an accurate attention to his own affairs, and thus confirm himself in an Habit, which would be eminently serviceable through Life.

THE "public Examinations in the respective Colleges," proposed in the ninth Amendment, would be noble Institutions; and the Delicacy, with which you desire to conduct them, does honor to the feelings of your heart. I am happy in the opportunity of informing you, that they are already established in many Colleges; and that they are extending their influence more widely every year. As they already prevail partially, as they are likely to become general in a short time, and as they respect the private Discipline of each College, they cannot be considered as Objects, which require the interference of the Legislature.

THE tenth and eleventh Articles suggest "a total  
"Alteration.

"Alteration of all the Public Exercifes." I mean not to defend the utility of thofe Exercifes in the prefent ftate of Learning: But I am unwilling to infringe upon antient Eftablifhments, when a compliance with their original Forms and Customs does not materially affect the Welfare of the Inftitution. Upon thefe grounds, and on thefe grounds only, I beg leave to recommend an adherence to the antient Exercifes of the Schools. If the prefent advantages for the Diffufion of Learning and the Display of Abilities, be fully adequate to the intention of an Academic Education; and if the time, confumed in the Performance of the customary and long eftablifhed Exercifes, be fhort and inconfiderable, the neceffity of the Infringement will be lefs urgent, and the inforcement of it lefs juftifiable. Now the various Exercifes, neceffary for the two Degrees of a Batchelor and a Master, if they could be performed in one continued feries, would be completed in a courfe of time not equal to the fpace of a Week. The feveral public Lectures, Theoretic and Experimental, illuftrative of the fundamental Principles of Science and Art, the various Exercifes more immediately connected with Polite Literature, which are performed in the feveral private Colleges, and the numerous Compoftions, which are annually produced by the diftribution of public Prizes, are amply fufficient to furnifh the youthful mind with abundant Stores of Knowledge, and to kindle the f acred Flame of Honour and Difinction. In Inftitutions, which are intended to promote the Caufe of Literature by communication of inftruction, and by incite-

ments

ments to emulation, there is a Boundary, which prudence forbids us to pass. By increasing the Honours you diminish their Effect, and by multiplying Examinations you distract the Attention. Thus by instituting new Honours and new Trials of Genius, you would only divert the Current from one Channel into another, and by widening the Surface you might contract the Depth.

THE "Establishment of one School for Elocution at large, and of another for the particular use of Students in Divinity," suggested in the twelfth, and fourteenth Amendments, would be productive of eminent Utility. But why solicit the Authority of the Legislature for the sanction of this Improvement? An invitation might be successfully given to the best Masters of Elocution in the Kingdom, by the proffer of a liberal reward, and their Authority for acting in their respective departments might be confirmed by the approbation of the Vice Chancellor, in the same manner as the Teachers of Modern Languages receive their sanction from the Vice Chancellor and the Professor of Modern History.

THE fourteenth and fifteenth Amendment, which propose "an Examination in Biblical Learning, and a Degree in Divinity, for those, who intend to take Holy Orders," would be both useless and improper. The necessity of the former is precluded by the Episcopal Examinations at the time of Ordination. And with respect to the latter, the Consecration of a Deacon and a Priest, must be considered



as a species of Degrees in the highest sense sacred and honourable; and (with all due reverence to the Universities) more distinguishing, as they are more appropriate, than any, which they could confer. Besides, by adopting these Amendments, the University would supersede the necessity and authority of an Episcopal Ordination. For it would be indecent and even injurious in the Bishop to refuse the admission of a Candidate into Holy Orders, whom the University had previously proposed as a Person qualified for the Sacred Function, by decorating him with the Honours of a Student in Divinity.

THE eighteenth Amendment I shall pass over, as it treats of the Regius Professors, and does not relate to the internal Discipline of the University, the vindication of which has been the principal Object of this Letter. Let me only observe, that the Regius Professors are generally connected in a similar branch of Literature with those Professors, who are appointed by the University, and who faithfully discharge the Duties of their Situation. Consequently the exertions of the Regius Professors are less requisite in completing the System of an Academic Education. I must likewise add, that the Proposition of allowing the Regius Professors, when disinclined to read Lectures, to resign upon a Pension, would be in the highest degree impolitic. A Professorship might in that case be too frequently considered, merely as an Introduction to those

honourable Indications of National Gratitude, which should be cautiously withheld from the Indolent and the Undeserving, and reserved only for the Reward of the most eminent Public Services.

YOUR nineteenth Amendment proposes, "That all Forms favouring of Monckery, Slavery, Popery, and Gothicism, should be utterly abolished." I applaud the judicious Amendment; and every Englishman of the eighteenth Century will surely aid the patriotic Design of exterminating from our Territories the Papists, Slaves, Monks, and Goths, who have dared to plant themselves in the very Centre of the Kingdom, and with a matchless effrontery have stood forth as the Guardians of the British Youth. The celebrated Achievements of the Great Reformer of the North will be lost in the Fame of his illustrious Descendant. Even the glorious Feats of early Knighthood will be revived and eclipsed by our daring and intrepid Adventurer. Let him but sound his Trumpet before our Battlements, and the prophane and disgraceful abodes of Ancient Superstition will tremble to their Foundations, and, like the visionary Castle of Enchantment, vanish at the Blast.

THE twenty-eighth Amendment, as the necessity of it can only arise from the adoption of the previous Propositions, need not be commented upon, till that adoption has taken place.

THE foregoing Survey of your Propositions, Sir, presents us with the most melancholy examples either of Impropriety in the Statement of Amendments, or of Inefficacy in their Enforcement, or of Inutility in their Accomplishment. The contemplation of such important Defects must depress your mind with the most painful and mortifying Reflections. That honest inward Pride, which Nature enkindles in our breasts from the consciousness of a meritorious though unsuccessful design, must be a stranger to the feelings of your heart: While the Shame and Contrition, which ever accompany the failure of a weak and ignoble attempt, must humble your character as a Scholar, and extenuate your importance as a Man. Happy would it be for you, Sir, if your punishment was confined to the sensations of your own breast: But a severer vengeance awaits you from the stigmas of Public Disapprobation. All Ages and Nations have uniformly reprobated the imprudent and injudicious Reformer. The general Freedom of the People has only operated towards restricting the Licence of Innovators. In the Athenian Democracy, the unsuccessful Proposer of an infringement on the Constitutional Establishment of the Theatre was hurried from the Assembly of the People, and consigned to the hands of the Executioner. It may probably be the subject of a secure and most grateful reflection to you, Sir, that the European Legislators have not imitated, in this particular, the prudent Republic of Athens.

FROM



FROM this gloomy Catalogue of palpable MISREPRESENTATIONS, gross CONTRADICTIONS, and INEFFICACIOUS AMENDMENTS, let me solicit your attention to a bright and amiable picture. The delineation is unfamiliar to your mind, and may charm by the graces of novelty. The University of Oxford stands eminently distinguished by the advantages it holds forth. The Retirement of Situation, the Assistance of Tutors, both public and private, the Classical Exercises and Examinations, the Regularity of Religious Duties, the Attention to Morality, the Regulation and Moderation of Expences, and the variety of Scholarships, Exhibitions and Fellowships, reserved for the rewards of Merit, all tend to invigorate the literary exertions of Youth, and to form the susceptible mind by the sacred principles of Knowledge and Morality. The numerous Libraries, both public and private, that are open for the researches of the Learned and the Inquisitive, are enriched with all the choicest stores of literary Treasure, and stand forth as glorious Monuments of the Powers of the Human Understanding. The various Courses of public Lectures, Theoretic and Experimental, in Law, Physic, Divinity, Astronomy, Geometry, Natural Philosophy, Botany, Chemistry, Anatomy, History and Oriental Literature, are admirably calculated to accommodate to each capacity the advantages of its favourite Science, and to give to uncommon Genius the benefit of all. To this we may add, that the distribution of annual Prizes, and the public recital of the successful Compositions, diffuse over the Uni-

versity a general Spirit of Emulation, and kindle in the youthful mind that Enthusiasm of Industry and Perseverance, which may lead the future Man to Eminence and Fame. The Seminary, which I defend, does not, like the similar Institutions of a Sister Kingdom, tarnish the lustre of its Honours by indiscriminately lavishing them both on the Eminent and the Unknown; but, preserving them from the Contamination of the undeserving, bestows them pure and unsullied on great and distinguished Merit. It is not, like the Foreign Universities, disunited in its Members, and unconnected by the salutary ties of Colleges and Common Societies: It does not, like them, with a prodigality of attention to the cause of Literature, neglect the more important culture of Religion and Morality. It is not, like its own commended Ancestry, distracted by internal and party commotions, defending the Errors of Science with unmanly, and even personal acrimony, bathed in the frequent blood of its own slaughtered Members, and recurring perpetually to the Interposition of Royal Authority. It maintains, together with its Sister University, an acknowledged pre-eminence over every Seminary in the World: It is confirmed and consecrated in its Establishments by the approbation and practice of Ages: And it is endeared to every classical and patriot mind by the long train of celebrated Progenitors, who, descending in a glorious and uninterrupted succession, have illustrated the Annals of their Country by matchless Examples of Excellence, and reflected by the splendor of their

their Names an unfading Lustre on this their common Parent.

WHAT a gloomy Reverse to this amiable Picture has our Reformer drawn! With the real spirit of an enthusiastic Innovator, he has collected into his description every hideous feature of deformity and vice. With an authoritative tone he assures us, <sup>a</sup> That Colleges are like Alms-Houses; <sup>b</sup> That the whole of their Laws, Customs, and Practices, with a very few exceptions, constitute a mass of folly and absurdity: <sup>c</sup> That the Lectures, both public and private, are either totally neglected, or delivered with Inutility: <sup>d</sup> That Immorality, habitual Drunkenness, Idleness, Ignorance and Vanity, openly and boastingly obtrude themselves on public view, and triumph without controul over the timidity of modest Merit: <sup>e</sup> That Pride, Vanity and the Love of Pleasure urge Academics to any conduct, that can confer Distinction, and afford Gratification: <sup>f</sup> That in no Places are Young Men more extravagant; <sup>g</sup> in none do they catch the contagion of admiring Hounds and Horses to so violent a degree; <sup>h</sup> in none do they learn to drink sooner; <sup>i</sup> in none do they become greater Slaves to Fashion; <sup>j</sup> in none do they more effectually shake off the fine Sensibilities of Shame, and glory in Debauchery; <sup>k</sup> in none do they earlier acquire a Contempt for their Parents; <sup>l</sup> in none do they learn so much to ridicule all, that is serious and sacred: That the most

<sup>a</sup> Id. P. 208.

<sup>b</sup> Id. P. 206.

<sup>c</sup> Id. Sect. 52.

<sup>d</sup> Id. P. 107.

<sup>e</sup> Id. P. 110.

<sup>f</sup> Id. P. 168.



unbounded Libertinism of Sentiment and Action prevails among Academics: <sup>s</sup> That Insincerity and Immorality are the first rudiments of an Academic Education: <sup>a</sup> That the Students are trained up in the Art of deceiving and of being deceived: <sup>1</sup> That their Consciences are seared against any future Impressions: <sup>4</sup> And that they not only practice Vice with Audacity, but even contend against Virtue on Principle.

IN perusing this melancholy Catalogue of the Deformities of the Human Mind, we seem rather to be conveyed into the Court of Comus, the habitations of Circe, or the Pandemonium of Satan, than into the flourishing Seminary of a refined Nation. Well may the indignant and spirited Reformer affix the deserved Title of fulsome Panegyrics on the public Commemorations <sup>1</sup> of Founders, who have impiously given birth to this unnatural Monster of Iniquity. Every feeling heart must surely melt with pity at the mere mention of the unhappy name of Alfred. Little did that amiable, but deluded Sovereign imagine, that in accomplishing a great object of his reign, he had completed the ruin of his posterity, and had struck a deadly blow to Genius and Ambition. The great Ornaments of the British Nation, retarded in their career of Fame, and weakened in their effusion of Abilities, by this Pollutor of Learning and Virtue, seem to rise in melancholy array against the present generation, and to urge

<sup>s</sup> Amhurst on the Universities, quoted by Knox. P. 132.

<sup>h</sup> Ibid. P. 132.

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. P. 133. <sup>k</sup> Knox's Treatise. P. 167. <sup>1</sup> Knox's Letter to Lord North. P. 13.

a tardy race to eradicate this common Pest of Science and Religion. But for its fatal influence, the human mind might have still maintained its original vigour and capacity. The judicious Blackstone might have completed his legal researches, and have erected a glorious Monument to the Laws and Constitution of his Country : The good, but ruined, Addison might have sublimed his imagination to a conception of the pure and unsullied Beauty of Virtue : And the venerable Lowth might have illustrated the Sacred Writers with a real fervor of holy Enthusiasm. Science through all her departments might have recurred with Gratitude to the Annals of British Literature, and have classed among her favourite Votaries an Hooker and an Hammond, a Johnson and a Locke, a Bacon and a Boyle.

SEVERE, indeed, is the loss, which the English Nation has sustained, and heavy is the crime, of which our Seminary stands charged. For if, amid the example of the Indolent, and the contagion of the Immoral, these celebrated Writers displayed such uncommon Abilities, with what transcendent lustre might they not have shone forth, if stimulated by Example, and animated by Reward. Their actual Productions, are but the Ruins of Genius, the melancholy Fragments of a Noble Mind : They can no more be compared with their possible Powers of Composition, than a Sky, darkened with Mists and Storms, may be placed in competition with the Heat and Splendor of a cloudless Noon.

THE

THE Examination, which has been freely made into your Statement of the Universities, and into your proposed Amendments, will not probably deter you from a similar attempt. Our ideas upon Reformation seem to differ in many material points: Allow me, therefore, to explain to you my conception of a judicious and useful Reformer.

HE would, first, ascertain with the minutest precision the real state of the Seminary, which he meant to reform: He would weigh with calm and deliberate judgment its respective Virtues and Defects: In examining the latter, he would strictly guard himself against imputing to the Body at large the errors of a particular Part; and would specify the exact ratio, which the delinquent Members bore to the whole Body. In forming his Description of the Seminary he would place its Virtues in the most forward, and the most amiable point of view; and while he proposed its Defects for Reformation, he would, from innate respect and affection, soften the Severity of his Remarks, by explaining the Causes, from which the Abuses have resulted. When he had thus formed his Statement with Exactness and with Delicacy, and had maturely considered the Amendments, which he desired to suggest, he would, if he was a Member of the Academic Senate, with a firm but modest air, submit his Plan to the judgment of that respectable Body:—For, while a possibility existed of effecting his virtuous Design in Secrecy and Silence, he would, with conscious pride, conceal the



the Errors of so venerable and popular a Seminary. If his Proposal was rejected, he would then submit it with Privacy to the Chancellor of the University, and solicit the intervention of the Legislature: For Delicacy would still influence his actions, and prevent him from exposing to public view the melancholy features of Academic Depravity. If he failed in this attempt likewise, he would at last approach, with diffidence and modest reserve, to the Tribunal of the People, and appeal to the Public Decision. A Reformer acting upon these Principles, would secure to himself the approbation of the Liberal and the Virtuous: If he succeeded, his Praises would be the popular Theme of his own Times, and his Memory would be revered through many a grateful Generation; and if he failed, his Failure would be eminently honourable, for he would fall, like Cato, with a falling State.

BUT this Picture may be rendered more compleat by a display of his Negative Qualifications. The Man, whom I describe, would never indulge himself in the Sallies of an uncontrouled Imagination, and, delineating a fanciful picture of consummate Immorality, propose it to the World as the faithful Representation of the Nursery of half a Kingdom. He would never break forth in the unmanly boast, that he held up the Seminary of his Country to PUBLIC SCORN AND PUBLIC CONDEMNATION:<sup>a</sup> For he would not forget the Ties of filial Affection; but would endeavour to

<sup>a</sup> Knox's Treatise on Education. P. 168. 177. 180. 185-6-7-8-9. 205. 207. 208.

<sup>b</sup> Knox's Letter to Lord North. P. 5.

throw a veil over the infirmities of a once indulgent Mother; and would propose his Admonitions, not with the malevolent triumph of an insulting Rival, but with the mild and amiable Earnestness of an affectionate Son. He would scorn to degrade himself by anticipating the Slanders of the Malevolent, and the Misrepresentations of the Interested: For his Understanding would convince him, that before Truth and Innocence all mean and malicious Aspersions spontaneously fade away; and he would propose his Amendments with the manly Simplicity of bold and conscious Rectitude. He would not, with an extravagance of Presumption, arrogate to himself the Approbation of the Public, and interpret the Silence of his Opponents into a tacit Acknowledgment of his own Triumph: For his Judgment would inform him, that Silence in an Opponent is the most humiliating Expression of Contempt. He would not dare, from false and unmanly Modesty, to proclaim the Deficiency of his own Conduct: For he would naturally coincide with the purest and most moral of Poets,<sup>3</sup> that there can be no public without private Virtues. He would not, in the Enthusiasm of Reformation, stigmatize the grateful Commemoration of Benefactors by the odious and contemptible Title of FULSOME PANEGYRIC: For his own mind would teach him, that the latent Principles of Virtue are kindled into action by public Encomiums on departed Excellence; and that the impassioned Effusions of a grateful Heart are the brightest Ornaments of Humanity.

<sup>c</sup> Knox's Treatise on Education. P. 153.

<sup>d</sup> Knox's Letter. P. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Knox's

Treatise. P. 175.

<sup>f</sup> Knox's Letter. P. 13.

<sup>g</sup> Thomson.

IF, Sir, in this Negative Delineation you should discover a Resemblance to any Living Character, it may probably correct an Error in your Perceptions by diminishing your Respect for the ORIGINAL.

I have now, Sir, completed the Design, which I proposed to myself by this Letter. I have examined into your Statement of the present Condition of the University with a Severity of Investigation indeed, but, I hope, with a sacred adherence to Truth. I have carefully withheld myself from virulent Inveective or ungenerous Insinuation: and, if in any Part of the Composition I have been betrayed into an Allusion, which may appear to affect your private Character, I solemnly renounce the illiberal Intention. The Sentiment arose entirely from my Subject, and refers only to the Passage, to which it is annexed: For I am firmly convinced, that the personal acrimony of a Controversialist will neither injure the Character of his Opponent, nor establish or strengthen his own Argument. I even wish to confine my Observations upon your literary Character to that Part of it only, which is connected with your Remarks upon the University; and I am happy to rank myself among the foremost Admirers of your Treatise on Education. The Liberality of Sentiment, and the Comprehension of Thought, which characterize all the former part of the Composition, do credit to your Feelings as a Scholar and a Man; and you have



have deservedly enjoyed the honourable Triumph of bearing off the Palm from Milton and from Locke.

BUT the general Eminence of your literary Qualifications serves only to aggravate the Culpability of your Academical Remarks. The diversified Examples of past Ages should have enabled you to anticipate all the baneful Consequences of hasty and injudicious Amendments. The Clearness and Consistency of Philosophical Investigations should have taught you to secure yourself from the mortifying and irreparable Overthrow of Self-Contradiction. The Accuracy of Historical Composition should have impressed you with an adequate Conception of the Importance and Dignity of a faithful Representation. And the Chastness and Delicacy of Sentiment, which are peculiar to the Cultivator of polite Literature, should have induced you not to imbitter your Remarks by the virulence of unmanly Invektive, but to temper them by the amiable Tendernefs of a refined and classical Taste. When illiterate Dullness, from the rude impulse of unrestricted Passion breaks forth in a licentious strain of unwarrantable Invektive, we forgive the Delusions of Ignorance, and pity the Frailties of untutored Humanity: But the Misrepresentations, and Contradictions, and Calumnies of a Mind, bountifully gifted by Nature, and enriched by the acquisitions of Science, are a flagrant abuse of the Powers of the Understanding, and admit of no Palliation.

PHILAETHES.

OXFORD,  
Feb. 6. 1790.